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ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES

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I

THE DESIGN OF THE RELIEFS ON THE VAPHIO CUPS

THE maturity of Mycenaean artistic genius is clearly revealed in metal work and especially in the decoration of the gold cups found at Vaphio (Fig. 1). These cups have been the subject of frequent discussion but yet, as becomes a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰεὶ*, they still invite study. The purpose of the present paper is to note certain features which stamp the designer as a master of consistent and refined composition.

The two cups, found together in a tomb, are companion pieces, inseparable as were perhaps their ancient possessors, (a prince and princess?) and are the prototypes in idea of a pair of cylices by Aristophanes<sup>1</sup> which were decorated with identical scenes and found together in a grave, and again of those Roman cups which came in couples from the well at Bosco Reale.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the reliefs on the Roman cups, those of Vaphio present a sharp contrast to each other. The violence of the one scene is offset by the repose of the other, like the opposition of certain pairs of groups in Greek gables. The subject of both reliefs is the bull, captured in one scene and domesticated in the other. The men in the scenes are puny when compared with the strong brutes, but their ultimate superiority is obvious. Riegl<sup>3</sup> in a praiseworthy appreciation of the reliefs says: "Ja es möchte fast scheinen als ob der schliessliche Sieg des menschlichen Witzes über die physische Überlegenheit der Tierwelt überhaupt das leitende Thema des Künstlers gewesen wäre"—a free restatement of the Sophoclean passage, *Ajax*, 1253:

μέγας δὲ πλευρὰ βοῦς ὑπὸ σμικρᾶς ὄμωσ  
μάστιγος ὀρθὸς εἰς ὁδὸν πορεύεται.

At the centre of the first scene, directly opposite the handle, is

<sup>1</sup> Furtwängler-Reichhold, *Griech. Vasenm.*, text, p. 42, pls. 128-129.

<sup>2</sup> *Mon. Piot*, V.

<sup>3</sup> *Jh. Oest. Arch.* I. 1906, p. 16.

a bull hopelessly enmeshed in a net. On either side is another, charging or dashing away, a veritable *βοὺς θοόριος*, the one on the left with fore legs raised, the other at the right with hind legs in air. Of the latter Reinach says:<sup>1</sup> "Comme si l'allongement extrême ne suffisait pas, l'artiste, pour exagérer l'impression de la vitesse, a soulevé la croupe de l'animal et combiné le motif du galop volant avec celui de la ruade." Here then is a balanced composition with relieving variation in the lateral counterparts and the fact of balance rendered less conspicuous by the diverting



FIGURE 1.—THE VAPHIO CUPS.  
After Schuchhardt.

prostration of two hunters. The impossible position of the bull in the net, habitually remarked in casual commentary upon the cups, is due to the requirement that the central figure must be transitional and carry the eye easily either way. Thus the fore-part of the bull is directed toward the right and the rear part toward the left. The resultant twist in the body of the animal, which at first sight seems to merit rebuke as primitive, is rather a skilful attempt to portray the desperate and violent writhing of the bull which one instant turns one way and the next instant turns back again, so quickly that it seems to be in both positions at the same time. This twisted form, then, admirably repro-

<sup>1</sup> *R. Arch.* XXXVI, 1900, p. 443.

duces the mental image, the memory picture of a writhing bull and at the same time finely serves the composition as a pivotal figure facilitating the transition from one half of the scene to the other.

Not only is the central figure logical and structural but it is also in harmony with the lateral figures. This point will be duly appreciated if one imagine the captured bull lying inert in the net. The sudden change from the violent motion of the escaping bulls to rest, in the captured brute, would be sharply displeasing. The violence of the flanking figures must be shared by the central figure. Lively bellowing is not enough, and so the artist resorts to a combination in one picture of two successive moments of the writhing of the bull. The result is a harmony of violence throughout the scene.

The principle here operative emerges again a thousand years later in the central group of the western gable of the Parthenon. The horses of Athena and Poseidon rear and snort because their owners standing between them are greatly agitated. The horses appear to be halted suddenly, but of course Athena and Poseidon have already stepped out of their chariots and so the horses ought to be at rest. As part of an harmonious design they must share the agitation of the intervening protagonists, just as in the eastern gable of the temple of Zeus at Olympia the horses framing the reposeful central quintet share its repose. In a word the principle is a matter of the continuity of mood, of gradation which forbids the juxtaposition of the antithetic conditions of violence and rest. This anticipation in Mycenaean art of a striking principle of Greek pedimental design of the best period is a tribute to the refined feeling of the unknown goldsmith who hammered out the Vaphio reliefs.

The writhing bull is not the only transitional figure in contemporary metal work. In a very vivid representation of a lion hunt inlaid upon a famous dagger<sup>1</sup> is another good illustration. In this scene, the foremost lion has charged so impetuously

<sup>1</sup> *B.C.H.* X, 1886, pl. II. Reinach, *l. c.* p. 444, regards the cups and dagger blades as works of the same school. "Tandisque le *schéma* d'un quadrupède au galop, dans tous les arts de l'antiquité, dessine une courbe convexe, se rapprochant plus ou moins de l'horizontalité, l'artiste mycénien tend à lui donner l'aspect d'une courbe concave. Cette particularité, à elle seule, suffirait à prouver que les poignards incrustés et les gobelets de Vaphio sont les oeuvres d'une même école. . . ."

a party of hunters as to impale himself upon a spear and bowl over the man who thrust the weapon at him. Two other lions are fleeing but the nearer of these turns his head back to look at their bold companion. He thus becomes the transitional figure in the design, facilitating the course of the eye as it passes from violent motion in one direction to violent motion in the opposite direction.

The composition of the scene on the second cup is simpler because the bodies of the bulls are all directed the same way. However, they are not merely strung on one after the other. At the left is a mildly recalcitrant bull bellowing a few lingering objections to domestication. His arched tail is an index of ill temper. The next bull is sympathetic, bellows a bit, arches his tail a little, and turns his head towards the third bull which gives no sign of irritation but seems capable of it. The fourth has no share in the unrest but quietly grazes. Thus from left to right there is a diminishing ripple of relatively slight excitement. The central group of two bulls, the interrelation of which has been boldly defined by Riegl as "*gemüthliche Verbindung*," is transitional in feeling. Their function as pivotal is marked both by their dominating mass and by the position of their heads. The head in front view of the one is saved from isolation by the other which turns "*liebkosend*" toward him.

The second bull is a very important figure in the composition. By looking back, he becomes associated with the bull nonchalantly grazing at the extreme right while his subdued bellowing and arched tail at once associate him in feeling with the irritated bull at the extreme left.

The two bulls at the ends of the scene balance each other in mass without however any approach to rigid symmetry. One raises his head to bellow and the other lowers his head to graze. This fine feeling for variation also appears in the treatment of trees and plants which incline and bend with the freedom of plants in the Hagia Triada frescoes, and again in the representation of ground and sky which effectively break the hard marginal lines of the field.

## II

### SCENES FROM THE ODYSSEY ON AN ETRUSCAN GRAVE STELE

Many years ago there was found at Bologna an Etruscan stele decorated with a series of scenes, two of which were immediately

recognized as from the *Odyssey*.<sup>1</sup> The sculptured portion of horse-shoe form, which is typical in the ancient necropolis of Felsina, is about 88 cm. high. Both faces and the broad edge of the stone are covered with sculpture in low relief. No artistic merit can be claimed for the reliefs. They are like many other examples of the class, the product of industry rather than of art, but the interpretation of them invites our interest. The date of the stele is the fifth century B.C. and probably the first half of that century. The archaism of the human forms is obvious and their heaviness suggests a period prior to the influence of Attic vase painting which brought about an attenuation of form in Etruscan art.

The major group of the obverse is funereal in character, the deceased making his last journey in a chariot drawn by winged horses.<sup>2</sup> But we are here concerned only with the six reliefs (Fig. 2) which decorate the broad edge of the stone, each in a frame measuring 31 x 27 cm. Below on the left are two scenes clearly alluding to the adventures of Odysseus. In the first is the monstrous form of Scylla,<sup>3</sup> in the second, Circe flanked by a pig and a pig-headed human form. The arrested transformation of the latter and the cups which the woman holds in her hands leave no doubt as to the scene.

The subjects of the remaining four reliefs are not so clear. The third square contains a figure which Brizio is inclined to regard as a genius of death that torments souls with a hammer. This would then be, as he himself objects, the first example of an Etruscan demon which carries besides the typical hammer, a saw and an object marked with what appears to be a scale. Ducati (col. 374) describes the figure as "un demone alato e barbuto," but Brizio does not mention a beard nor is one to be seen in his reproduction of the relief.

Since the first two scenes are epic, why not seek a similar source for this and their counterparts on the other side of the stone? It is here suggested that the winged figure with saw, hammer and carpenter's rule (?) is Calypso bringing tools for the construction of the raft on which Odysseus was to leave her island:

<sup>1</sup> Brizio, *Not. Scav.* 1890, pp. 139 ff., pl. I; Ducati, *Mon. Ant.* XX, cols. 374, 699-700; Grenier, *Bologne Villanovienne et Etrusque*, pp. 438-9, where a poor reproduction of the obverse is given.

<sup>2</sup> *Denk. G. u. R. Sculptur*, text, p. 11, to pls. 586-7.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the representations of Scylla in Roscher, *Lexikon*, s. v. Skylla.

τόφρα δ' ἔνεικε τέρετρα Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων. (V, 246.)

Mention is made of other tools:

δῶκε μὲν οἱ πέλεκυν μέγαν. (V, 234.)

δῶκε δ' ἔπειτα σκέπαρνον ἑῷξον. (V, 237.)

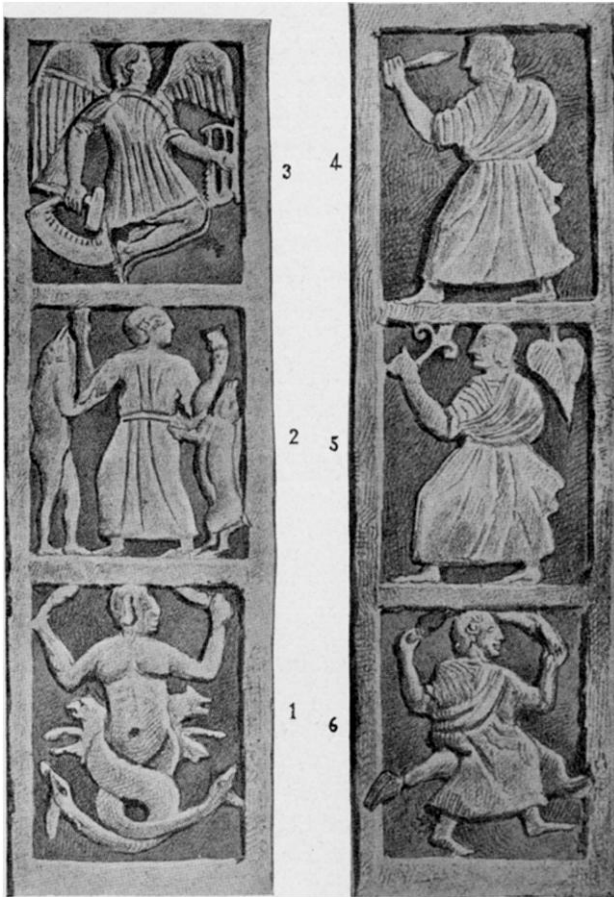


FIGURE 2.—FROM AN ETRUSCAN STELE AT BOLOGNA.

An exact correspondence in the kind of tools should not be expected. Homer fails to mention the saw which appears in the relief.

The fourth frame contains a single figure which does not admit of close definition. According to Brizio (p. 141) it represents

“una donna la quale corre impetuosa verso sinistra stringendo nello stesso tempo con la destra una spada sguainata.” The figure in the relief below is also “una donna la quale corre tenendo in mano un fiore.” Brizio was deceived by the dress of these two figures into thinking that female forms were intended, but in Ionia, which exercised so much influence on Etruria, the fully draped male figure was the rule, as is shown in art by the seated figures of Branchidae and a statue from Samos<sup>1</sup> and in literature by the Homeric epithet *ἐλκεχίτωνες Ἴαονες*. If these figures are male, then number five may well be interpreted as Odysseus approaching the palace of Circe with the potent flower, which Hermes gave him:

ρίζη μὲν μέλαν ἔσκε, γάλακτι δὲ εἴκελον ἄνθος.  
μῶλυ δὲ μιν καλέουσι θεοί. (X, 304.)

The interpretation of the last figure as a Nereid riding on a dolphin and holding in upraised hands the greaves of Achilles has been accepted by Ducati (col. 374) and Grenier (p. 452). But here again one may reasonably suggest that the figure is Odysseus holding the veil which Ino, the sea goddess, gave the hero to save him from the sea.

τῇ δέ, τόδε κρήδεμνον ὑπὸ στέρνοιο τανύσσαι  
ἄμβροτον. (V, 346.)

The sequence of the series from left to right, beginning with the upper register, is practically that of the Homeric narrative, as the following table shows:

- a. Calypso with tools for the raft. *Odyssey*, V, 234 ff.
- b. Odysseus or comrade with dagger (?).
- c. Transformation of comrades by Circe. *Odyssey*, X, 230 ff.
- d. Odysseus with the μῶλυ. *Odyssey*, X, 302 ff.
- e. Scylla. *Odyssey*, XII, 85 ff.
- f. Odysseus with the veil. *Odyssey*, V, 346 ff.

It thus appears that four of the six scenes observe the Homeric order. The agreement is really greater. The second figure of the first register is too vaguely defined to disturb the sequence, and chronologically the escape from the sea follows the other adventures, though in Homer reference to it precedes the account of them.

An obvious objection to this suggestion is that one looking at the monument would expect to find such sequence first in the

<sup>1</sup> *Ath. Mitt.* 1906, pls. X-XII.



three scenes on one side and then in the three scenes on the other, where the eye could readily note it. The objection would be valid if we assumed that the Etruscan sculptor designed the series himself, but the safer assumption is that he had under his eye a model of Ionian provenience,—a metal relief, perhaps, with scenes in rows of two, which he separated vertically to suit the field he wished to decorate. Mythological scenes are limited to four examples in this class of stelae,<sup>1</sup> and such copying may therefore be expected.

The possibility of a series of Homeric scenes in sequence, dating probably from the early fifth century, is of interest in view of a statement in Müller:<sup>2</sup> “Zyklen von Bildwerken, die entweder ganze Gedichte oder Teile von ihnen in einer kontinuierlichen Szenenfolge illustrieren, kommen in der Griechischen Kunst zuerst in der Periode Alexanders auf. Für diese Zeit sind die Zyklen von Tafelbildern bezeugt auf denen Theon von Samos das *bellum iliacum* und die Geschichte des Orestes dargestellt hatte.” Theon of Samos may have had Ionic prototypes for his *bellum iliacum*,—simple series like that of the Etruscan grave stele found at Bologna.

### III

#### THE EXERGUE IN CYRENAIC CYLICES

The interior scenes of Cyrenaic cylices are remarkable because of their diversity and novelty and again because of a subtlety of suggestion in the motifs of the exergue of some which is unequalled in contemporary or subsequent Greek vase painting.<sup>3</sup>

The exergue of the Cyrenaic cylix in a number of cases is filled with buds and palmettes (*e.g.*, *Arch. Zeit.* 1881, pl. 13) which have only decorative value but there are several exergues with motifs which more or less clearly present a connection in thought with the scene painted in the larger segment. It is this phase of Cyrenaic or Laconian design which is here considered.

The first illustration is found in the cylix the interior scene of which naïvely represents the blinding of Polyphemus (Fig. 3).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ducati, *op. cit.* col. 698.

<sup>2</sup> *Odyssee-Illustrationen*, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> For a list of Cyrenaic cups, see Dumont et Chaplain, *Les Céramiques de la Grèce Propre*, pp. 295ff; Droop, *J. H. S.* 1910, p. 33; Dugas, *R. Arch.* XX, 1912, p. 89, who also gives a concise statement (p. 98) of the arguments for and against the Laconian provenience of the category.

<sup>4</sup> *Mon. d. Inst.* I, pl. 7; Huddilston, *Lessons from Greek Pottery*, p. 73.

The exergue is filled with a large fish while above Odysseus and his comrades is a snake. Heydemann thought that the snake was a symbol of the danger threatening Polyphemos and that the fish in the exergue indicated his certain death. Dumont, *op. cit.* p. 297, note 1, rejects this view regarding both as merely reminiscences of the decorative motifs so frequent in primitive painting like that of the Dipylon period. This opinion is shared by Dugas, *loc. cit.* p. 94, who speaks of the fish as "purement décoratif."

It seems strange that an old but for the most part brilliant interpretation of the fish and the snake has been completely ignored. The Duc de Luynes, *Ann. d. Inst.* 1829, p. 280, interprets them as follows: "Le serpent qui, dirigé contre le cyclope, est dans l'action de l'attaque, paraît accompagner Ulysse, soit qu'on le considère comme un des attributs assez ordinaires de Minerve, soit qu'il ne représente que l'astuce et la finesse du héros grec. Cette conjecture paraît d'autant plus vraisemblable, que le poisson, prêt à dévorer un appât tel qu'il est peint dans la partie inférieure de la composition, doit être une allusion à la stupidité et à la folle confiance du cyclope. C'est ici le lieu d'observer combien l'artiste a su calculer habilement les images symboliques de son sujet, en choisissant pour représenter Ulysse le reptile consacré à Minerve et pour Polyphème un poisson, qui devait convenir au fils de Neptune." The object in contact with the mouth of the fish is not an ornament as Dumont thought, because ground ornaments are placed by the Cyrenaic painters toward the centre of empty spaces<sup>1</sup> but rather a hook.<sup>2</sup> Thus the note of deception in the principal scene is repeated in the exergue. The fish suggests the sea and Polyphemos was a son of the sea-god. Both have been caught.



FIGURE 3.—THE BLINDING OF POLYPHEMUS.

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Zeit.* 1881, pl. 12, nos. 2, 3; pl. 13, no. 5.

<sup>2</sup> For the antique forms of fish-hooks v. Daremberg et Saglio, s. v. *hamus*, especially fig. 3699.

The second example is the cup in which is painted a scene of the punishment of Prometheus.<sup>1</sup> At the left is Atlas, the brother of Prometheus, bearing the burden of the heavens. The exergue contains a Doric shaft with lotus buds as space-fillers on either side. The shaft not only repeats the motif of support in the Atlas but was very probably suggested to the painter by the Homeric reference to Atlas and his columns (Od. I: 53).

ἔχει δέ τε κίονας αὐτός  
μακράς αἱ γαῖάν τε καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀμφὶς ἔχουσι.

The interior scene of yet another cylix (*Jb. Arch. I.* 1901, pl. 3) offers a possible instance of a connection in idea between the motifs of its major and minor segments. In the former is a procession of warriors carrying their wounded or slain comrades; in the exergue are two fighting cocks facing each other. They express again the idea of conflict suggested by the warriors returning with their wounded. But it must be noted that there are other Cyrenaic cylices where the same group in the exergue cannot be thus interpreted; e.g., Böhlau, *Aus Ion. u. Ital. Nekropolis*, pl. XI. A similar relation between the fields appears on a fragmentary cylix (*B. C. H.* 1893, p. 235) where beneath a martial scene two snarling lions face each other.

There remains the Arcesilas cylix. In the larger segment is a scene on shipboard in which bags of silphium are weighed; the exergue is the space below deck where the bags are stored. Here there is a studied connection of scenes in the two segments but of a more intimate character than in the preceding examples. Besides a connection in idea there is a unity of place and time.

The interest of the Cyrenaic painter in the exergue was not shared by his Attic contemporaries and their successors. Execias could do without the exergue (F.-R. *Griech. Vasenm.* pl. 42) as could Euphronius and his associates, who, however, paid particular attention to the interior scene. Later in the period of the fine style, when the cylix ceased to be a popular form, Aristophanes showed his indifference by leaving the exergue conspicuously empty or merely placing his signature there (F.-R. *op. cit.* pls. 127-9).

<sup>1</sup> Gerhard, A. V. II, pl. 86; Daremberg et Saglio, I, p. 527.

## IV

## THE VINE OF PYTHIOS AND ANDOCIDES

The wealthy Lydian Pythios once made a present of a golden vine to Darius,<sup>1</sup> the fame of which is attested by several references<sup>2</sup> in ancient writers. There are quotations in Athenaeus (XII, 514f), one from Chares of Mitylene to the effect that the Persian monarchs placed it above a couch in a sleeping chamber, another from Amyntas telling of its grapes of precious stones, and a third from Phylarchus who says that the Persian monarchs often transacted business as they rested beneath it. According to Himerius, *Eclogae*, XXXI, 8, the vine was made by Theodorus of Samos, to whom Hogarth,<sup>3</sup> refers as "the Theodorus of one of the primitive Artemesia."

The fame of this Ionic work, produced at a time when Ionia was exerting a vital influence upon Attic art, makes reasonable the suggestion that it was the mental model for those vines which shade couches in Attic vase-paintings of the sixth century. One of these paintings in the style of the transitional artist Andocides<sup>4</sup> shows Heracles reclining beneath a vine in the presence of Athena. The vine is here complete but in two other paintings<sup>5</sup> the stock has been omitted. In another example<sup>6</sup> Dionysus appears beneath the vine.

The ultimate source of the motif is Assyrian. According to Jacobsthal,<sup>7</sup> Egyptian, Mycenaean, and Babylonian art offer no instance of the reclining banquetor. A well-known relief of the seventh century representing Assurbanipal reclining on a couch which is shaded by a vine with grapes is the earliest example and this is regarded by Miss Heinemann<sup>8</sup> as "eine Parallelbildung zu den in der griechischen von Ionien abhängigen Keramik unzählig häufigen Darstellungen des in der Weinlaube gelagerten Dionysos."

It may well be that the Lydian (Croesus?) who commissioned Theodorus of Samos to make a golden vine for a couch, appro-

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, VII, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Macan, Herodotus, *ad loc.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ephesus*, p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> Furtwängler-Reichhold, *Griech. Vasenm.*, pl. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Gerhard, *A. V.* pls., 108, 142.

<sup>6</sup> Roulez, *Choix de Vases Peints*, pl. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Abh. Ges. Wis. Gött.*, N. F. XIV, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> *Landschaftliche Elemente in der Griechischen Kunst bis Polygnot*, p. 37.

priated an Assyrian motif (reserved in that art for royalty?) which thus advertised throughout Ionia was readily transmitted to the humble vase painters of Athens,—among them, Andocides.

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